

## 2. BRITISH COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATIONS, APRIL—MAY, 1946

The Right Hon. W. Nash represented the Prime Minister at a series of informal consultations among British Commonwealth Prime Ministers and Ministers at London from 23rd April to 23rd May, 1946. Several members of the United Kingdom Cabinet were present, including the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Dominions Secretary; and from the Dominions came Mr. Mackenzie King, Field Marshal Smuts, Mr. Chifley, and Dr. Evatt.

The consultations covered a wide range of subjects of common and vital concern to all members of the Commonwealth, and included foreign policy, responsibilities for and organization of British Commonwealth defence, the withdrawal from Egypt, the situation in Palestine, procedure for the peace settlements, the peace with Italy and the other German satellites, the future of Italian colonies, policy towards Germany, and the South Seas Regional Commission.

The discussions were, as is usual among the members of the Commonwealth, frank and friendly, and there was an evident desire to look into matters of disagreement rather than to set them aside. No formal decisions were reached and no commitments were made; such was not the purpose of the meeting. A number of problems were raised, however, which are of far-reaching importance to New Zealand.

It emerged clearly from the facts presented during the discussions that Britain's economic and man-power position, which has become straitened as a result of her prodigious war effort, makes it incumbent upon other members of the Commonwealth to take an increased share of the commitments involved in the British Commonwealth defence system. Some consideration was given to the methods by which this might be done—*e.g.*, by an increase of regional responsibility—and to its implications for foreign policy and defence policy.

A valuable discussion took place upon the peace settlement with Italy and the Balkan enemies. No attempt was made to reach agreed policies, but it was ensured that each delegation to the Paris Peace Conference thoroughly understood the position of all members of the Commonwealth. The concern of the Dominions at the inadequate recognition of their contribution to Allied victory shown by the role allotted to them in drafting the Peace Settlement was shared by the United Kingdom Government.

The machinery of British Commonwealth consultation was reviewed, and Mr. Nash, in pursuance of the New Zealand Government's policy to maintain the fullest Commonwealth co-operation, made proposals designed to increase the amount of inter-Dominion consultation by making the exchange of information and opinion among the Dominions as complete as the exchange between the individual Dominions and the United Kingdom. Mr. Nash's proposals were welcomed. During the last year arrangements have been developed by which important policy messages from one member of the Commonwealth to another are repeated to all members, and by which despatches to their Governments from British Commonwealth representatives in foreign countries are circulated among all members. Such arrangements indicate the complete confidence existing among the members of the Commonwealth and their conviction that the sharing of all information and frank consultation without commitment are as effective ways of harmonizing their interests and policies as any formal agreements.

## 3. AUSTRALIAN - NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS

Relations between New Zealand and the United Kingdom have for some years been almost fully developed. The next step in strengthening the Commonwealth association appeared to the New Zealand Government to be to develop the relations among the Dominions to a similar degree of intimacy.

A cardinal principle of the Government's external policy, reinforced by experience in the Pacific war, is close association with Australia, whose interests are practically identical with those of New Zealand. Recognition of the need for a greater measure of collaboration with the Australian Government led to the framing of the Australian - New Zealand Agreement of January, 1944, which provided for the establishment of